# Nixon Says Watergate Cover-Up Sought to Protect the Innocent

NEW YORK, May 1 (AP)—Richard Nixon says his immediate actions after the Watergate burglary were designed "not to try to cover up a criminal action" but to contain the scandal for political reasons.

The former President, in a television interview to be aired Wednesday, says he wanted to avoid "any slop-over in a way that would damage innocent people."

The interview, the first of a series of four, marks the end of Nixon's self-imposed public silence on the Watergate scandal that brought his resignation.

Time magazine published excerpts in this week's issue. British television personality David Frost, who conducted the interviews, gave Time access to the tapes of the shows.

Nixon's week of Watergate-revisited began today with a media splash and disclosures that he was involved in the scandal and hush-money payments earlier than previously known.

The transcript of a White House tape recording never before published showed that Nixon was aware of money-for-silence demands in January, 1973, 2½ months before John Dean's "cancer on the presidency" speech. Nixon has always claimed that the talk with Dean, his counsel, was the first he knew of the demands.

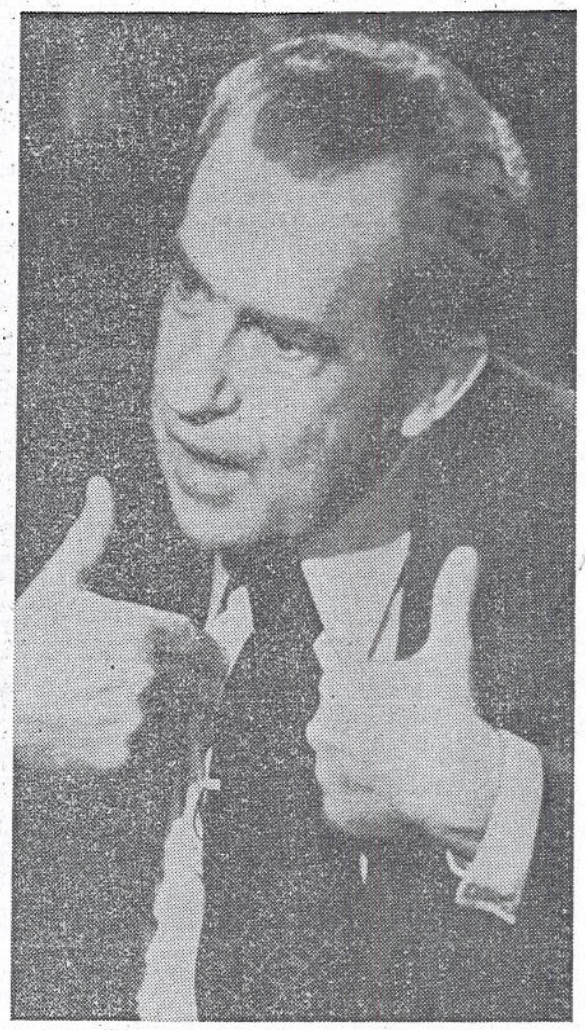
The recordings, which are cited in the Frost interview, add little new information, but reinforce Nixon's preoccupation with Watergate from the beginning. Three days after the June 17, 1972, break-in at Democratic headquarters, he told aide Charles W. Colson: "It doesn't sound like a skillful job . . . If we didn't know better, would have thought it was deliberately botched."

The transcripts, published in The Washington Post, The New York Times, Time and Newsweek, have been in the possession of Watergate lawyers for years.

A spokesman said the newly published transcripts were not released by Frost. The current Watergate prosecutor, Charles Ruff, said his office didn't furnish them either.

Colson, who served more than four months in prison on a Watergate-related charge, said the transcripts are inaccurate and misleading. He suggested that they were early, uncorrected versions.

"This whole thing today to me is a puff job for the Frost show," he said in a telephone interview. "The fact that the media could be so manipulated to take old tapes, using material demonstrated to be inaccurate, use phrases like 'hush money' which are not in the transcripts, then hype it up, makes me suspicious of the whole thing."



Associated Press

**Former President Nixon in television interview.**